

Message Text

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44

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-13 NIC-01 OMB-01

AID-20 DRC-01 /180 W

----- 085506

R 121330Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5636

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

USINT CAIRO

COMIDEASTFOR

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 01281

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y PARA SIX LINE TWO FIRST
WORD FROM COLLABORATING TO CORROBORATING

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, MA, UR, EG, PK

SUBJ: SOVIET AND ARAB NAVAL VISITS TO PORT OF DIEGO SUAREZ

1. THREE SOVIET SHIPS, OF WHICH AT LEAST ONE WAS APPARENTLY A
NAVAL VESSEL, WERE OBSERVED AT DIEGO SUAREZ ON SEPT 7 AND 8 BY
A LEADING MALAGASY CANNED MEAT AND FISH PRODUCER. MR. CHARLES
ANDRIANTSITOHAINA TOLD AMB AND DCM AT AMB'S RESIDENCE ON SEPT 8
THAT HE HAD SEEN SUCH SHIPS DURING HIS LATEST BUSINESS TRIP TO
DIEGO SUAREZ FROM WHERE HE HAD RETURNED JUST THAT SAME DAY.
HE DESCRIBED ONE OF THE SHIPS AS A "BATEAU GRUE" (CRANE SHIP)
AND SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY WERE ON THEIR WAY TO BE TURNED
OVER TO PAKISTAN. HE BELIEVED SOVIET VESSELS WERE SCHEDULED TO
DEPART DIEGO SUAREZ ON SUNDAY, SEPT 9.

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2. IN RESPONSE TO THE AMB'S INQUIRY ABOUT WHETHER SOVIET CREW-

MEMBERS HAD COME ASHORE, ANDRIANTSITOHAINA REPLIED, "NO", BUT HE HAD TALKED WITH ONE OF THE SOVIET OFFICERS WHO, HE SAID, HAD OFFERED HIM A BOTTLE OF VODKA. IT WAS HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT IT WAS THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES RATHER THAN THE MBALAGASY WHO HAD DECIDED THAT THE SAILORS NOT DISEMBARK.

3. THE QUESTION ABOUT PERSONNEL ASHORE LED ANDRIANTSITOHAINA TO MENTION HE HAD ALSO SEEN AT LEAST ONE "ARAB SHIP" IN DIEGO SUAREZ PORT. HE LEFT IMPRESSION THAT THIS WAS DURING HIS SAME TRIP LAST WEEK. ARAB CREW, HE SAID, HAD BEEN REFUSED PERMISSION TO COME ASHORE BY MALAGASY AUTHORITIES. WHEN PRESSED ON WHAT KIND OF ARABS HAD SHIP VISITING DIEGO SUAREZ, HE REPLIED HE THOUGHT IT WAS EGYPTIAN.

4. SINCE ANDRIANTSITOHAINA IS RESPONSIBLE EMBASSY CONTACT, THERE IS NO REASON TO DOUBT VERACITY OF PRESENCE THESE SHIPS LAST WEEK AT DIEGO SUAREZ. THERE WAS NO MEDIA COVERAGE OF THESE VISITS, HOWEVER.

5. COMMENT: GOVT MAY BE MAKING DELIBERATE STEPS TO KILL STORIES ON VISITS TO DIEGO SUAREZ OF SHIPS WHOSE PRESENCE THERE IS POLITICALLY SENSITIVE. WE HAVE NOTED THAT USS INGRAM VISIT SEPT 3 GOT NO MEDIA COVERAGE, WHEREAS EARLIER VISITS OF NETHERLANDS AND IRANIAN SHIPS DID.

6. ACTION REQUEST: IF ANY ADDRESSES HAVE DISCREET MEANS OF CORROBORATING THAT THAT THESE SHIPS, PARTICULARLY SOVIET ONES, HAVE BEEN IN VICINITY DIEGO SUAREZ RECENTLY, EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE INFO.

7. IN VIEW THIS INDICATION OF SOVIET NAVAL VISIT TO DIEGO SUAREZ WE PLAN STATE TO MALAGASY FOREIGN MINISTRY AT APPROPRIATE POINT THAT WE ASSUME THERE IS NO LONGER ANY OBJECTIONS IN PRINCIPLE TO VISITS OF US NAVAL VESSELS TO THAT PORT.
MENDENHALL

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